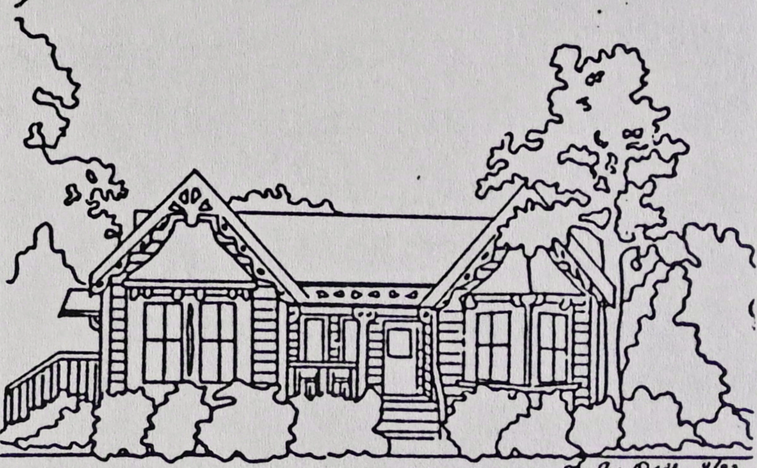
ROBB HOUSE

MEDICAL MUSEUM



Alachua County
Medical Society &
Auxiliary

Ephemeral - Alachua

The Robb House in Gainesville, Florida, is a Medical Museum and the home of the Alachua County Medical Society and Auxiliary. The house was originally the home and office of Drs. Robert and Lucretia Robb, one of Florida's first husband and wife physician teams. The Robb House has been restored by the Alachua County Medical Society and Auxiliary. This early physicians' home and office in Alachua County stands as a monument to the early physicians of the county and to the 725 practicing and retired physician members of today. The Medical Museum houses the original furniture and medical equipment used by the Drs. Robb. Many early medical artifacts including instruments, furniture, a restored pharmacy front, and medical equipment reflect medicine as it was in the late 1800's.

THE ROBBS

In 1882, at the age 42, Robert Lee Robb, M.D., a homeopathic physician, came to Gainesville from Chicago in hope of recuperating from tuberculosis. Dr. Robb was born in 1840 in Iowa. He graduated from the Missouri Homeopathic College of Medicine in 1873.

His wife, Sarah Lucretia Robb, M.D., three daughters and a son joined him in Gainesville in 1883. Dr. Lucretia Robb had obtained a nursing degree from Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia. Her husband, whom she married on February 14, 1872, recognized Lucretia's potential as a doctor. She was refused entry by U.S. medical schools, since it was unusual at the time for a woman to be a doctor. Dr. Robert took her to Germany, where after two years of study, she received her medical degree.

The Drs. Robb entered into many civic endeavors, while they practiced medicine in Gainesville. Dr. Robert was instrumental in establishing the Oddfellows Home, a newspaper, a furniture factory, and one of the first private boarding schools in Alachua County, and he was a member of the county school board. Dr. Lucretia was one of the founders of the Gainesville Garden Club, a member of the First Presbyterian Church choir, and was known for her tailoring and hand work. Together they wrote the Robb Family Physician, which embodies the holistic approach to medicine we are seeing revived today.

Dr. Robert Robb died in 1903 at the age of 62. Dr. Lucretia continued to practice medicine in her office and as a "horse and buggy" doctor, administering to the sick and delivering babies. She retired in 1917. In retirement she continued to be an active member of the community and church until her death on May 3, 1937, at age 83.

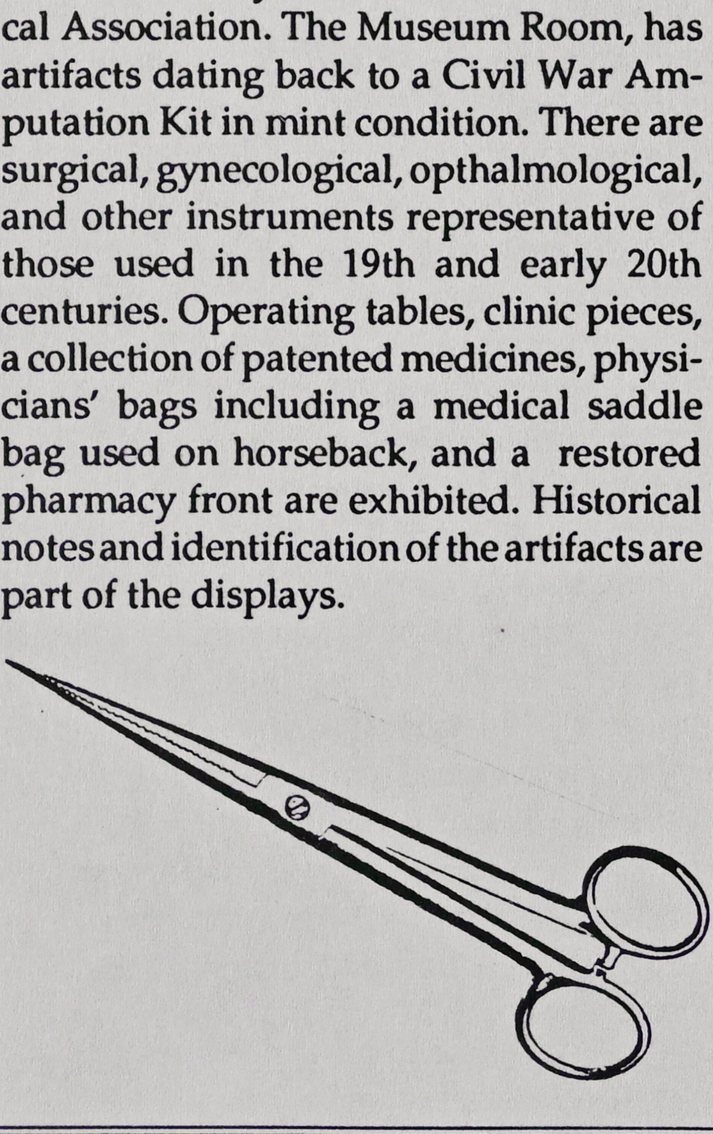
THE HOUSE

The Robb House was constructed in 1878 by Joseph Avera, a blacksmith. It was located at 406 East Liberty Street now East University Avenue. In 1898 the Robbs purchased the house for $1,000 and a year later added a southwest office. The addition resulted in two unique bays, one triangular in shape and one square in shape. When Dr. Sarah Lucretia Robb died, the Robb house was willed to Margaret Gross, her housekeeper. In 1938, Mrs. Gross gave the house to Dr. Robb's three daughters. In 1939 the house was sold to Joe C. Jenkins Sr., an attorney, and in 1973 the house was sold to a group of attorneys represented by Henry L. Gray.

The house was used as a dance studio, karate center and apartment rental. After several years, it fell into complete disrepair and was scheduled for demolition by the city. The Alachua County Medical Society became interested in it as a future office. The house was purchased by the Society April 11, 1981, and moved to a new site, 235 S.W. 2nd Ave.. Restoration was completed in nine months at an approximate cost of $90,000. A feasibility study and historical assay were prepared by professors and students of architectural preservation at the University of Florida. Family members provided photographs and background information for authenticity. The formal dedication of the Robb House was held April 17, 1982 by Henry J. Babers, M.D., past President of the Florida Medical Association.

THE MEDICAL MUSEUM

Furniture, equipment, instruments, and other artifacts have been donated to the museum through the generosity of physicians and members of the community. The living room has the original furniture of the Robbs and other appointments are as close to the original as possible. The Robb Room was the medical office of the Robbs and houses a collection of books, instruments, pictures, handwork, and the original chairs used in the office. The Board Room has a display of photographs of physicians who have served as president of the Alachua County Medical Society and of the Florida Medical Association. The Museum Room, has artifacts dating back to a Civil War Amputation Kit in mint condition. There are surgical, gynecological, opthalmological, and other instruments representative of those used in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Operating tables, clinic pieces, a collection of patented medicines, physicians' bags including a medical saddle bag used on horseback, and a restored pharmacy front are exhibited. Historical notes and identification of the artifacts are part of the displays.



TOURS

The Medical Museum and Alachua County Medical Society and Auxiliary offices are located in the historic Robb House at 235 S.W. Second Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 23601.

The Medical Auxiliary conducts tours of the house and museum by appointment. Tours may be arranged by calling (904) 376-0715 weekdays during regular business hours. After hours call (904) 378-9073. For further information write:

The Alachua County Medical Society
235 S.W. Second Avenue
Gainesville Fl 32601.